

Representative Henry A. Waxman
H.Con.Res. 280
December 5, 2001

I rise in strong support for H.Con.Res. 280 and join my colleagues in condemning Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian terrorists responsible for the massacre of innocent Israeli civilians.

In the past six months alone, Hamas suicide bombers have murdered teenagers at a discotheque in Tel Aviv, commuters on a rush hour bus ride in Haifa, pedestrians at a busy intersection in Afula, families eating lunch at a pizza store in Jerusalem, and a street filled with young Israelis and Americans out for a Saturday night in the heart of the nation's capital.

On a daily basis, the Tanzim and Force 17, Yasser Arafat's Fatah paramilitary forces shoot at Israeli motorists on their way to work, school, or returning to their homes.

Instead of arresting, prosecuting, and outlawing these terrorists, Yasser Arafat has deliberately given them free reign, safe harbor, and license to organize and carry out heinous attacks. Instead of condemning anti-Israel incitement in Palestinian media, schools, and mosques, he has contributed the free flow of hatred that seeks to legitimize violence. And in doing so, he has turned the Palestinian Authority into nothing short of the Taliban.

The horrific events of September 11 have tragically brought home to all Americans the terrorism that Israel has long been suffering. Our solidarity has never been stronger or more important.

Now more than ever, we must renew the common purpose, strategic goals and democratic ideals that are the cement of strong U.S.-Israel relations. We must join together with Israel in defending our citizens, our values, and our future from the shadow of terrorism.

That is why this resolution determines that the United States should break off all diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority unless immediate action is taken to destroy the Palestinian terrorist network and arrest the perpetrators of these terrorist crimes.

Yasser Arafat must be held accountable, and there is no reason to contemplate the creation of a Palestinian state unless he can demonstrate that the terrorism will end. So far he has been unwilling to achieve this for even seven days, giving neither Israel nor the United States reason to be confident that he has the will or ability to do so permanently.

But one thing is certain – Israel as a sovereign nation has the right to take all measures necessary to defend its citizens, and it is in the interest of the United States to support its ability to do so.

Now is the time for us to pressure Yasser Arafat to crush the terrorist networks within his grasp, and urge all civilized nations of the world to abandon the ongoing efforts by Arab and Islamic states to isolate Israel in this time of crisis.

Just hours ago in Geneva, an international conference convened to condemn Israel for violations

of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was adopted in response to Nazi atrocities during the Holocaust. The agenda included biased determinations on the final status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, and the imposition of a United Nations observer force.

Only yesterday, the U.N. General Assembly overwhelming voted for resolutions advocating the creation of a Palestinian state, Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and rejecting Jerusalem's status as the capital of Israel as "illegal and therefore null and void."

These one-sided determinations are irresponsible and counterproductive. They devastate the constructive role the international community could play in ending the violence and terrorism that have taken so many American and Israeli lives.

I commend the Administration for staunchly opposing these forums, and I applaud its actions yesterday to freeze the assets of the charities and banks raising funds in the United States to support the terrorist activities Hamas and other Palestinian groups.

Today we must do more. We must pass H.Con.Res. 280 and let Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian terrorist organizations know that there is a line that separates outlaws from the rest of civilized society and they have crossed it.